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Cassis: Wixom and Beck Fit the Bill

Road Projects Focus on Safety, Economic Development

LANSING— After the Michigan Transportation Commission learned Thursday of an additional \$200 million allocated toward funding projects in MDOT's Five Year Road and Bridge Plan, Sen. Nancy Cassis (R-Novi) reiterated today her commitment to see that the restoration of the Wixom and Beck road interchanges take effect.

"This new funding in the five year plan leaves the door open now for projects that are the highest priority because of safety and economic investment," Cassis said. "The department has said they will consider using the additional funds where local governments have raised money for projects, and they will concentrate on preserving and maintaining roads while also focusing on economic development. Wixom and Beck fit that bill to a tee."

In November of 2000, Novi residents approved a \$6 million bond dedicated to the reconstruction of the Beck Road interchange. Novi City Manager Rick Helwig contacted MDOT Director Gloria Jeff earlier this month and offered to release to MDOT Novi's \$6 million to assist the department in expediting the first-phase of the project.

In anticipation of the reconstruction of the two interchanges, the community has invested in projects that would be served by the reconstruction. Some of these projects include the transfer of 200 beds to Providence Hospital; the anticipated relocation of the Novi Expo Center; the pending arrival of Catholic Central High School; light industrial facilities; new housing; and significant retail centers.

"I will remain in contact with MDOT, the Transportation Commission, and local officials to provide information and support as we await the decision on how this funding will be spent," Cassis said.

Cassis was shocked in April to learn both Wixom and Beck were among the 34 road projects MDOT Director Gloria Jeff deferred from the department's five year plan in favor of the Granholm administration's "Preserve First" initiative.

Since 1997 when Cassis amended the MDOT budget to add a study of the Wixom and Beck interchanges and two years later as she guided their inclusion into the 5 Year Road and Bridge Plan, she has been working to make sure that the road projects go through.

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